Extradition of Afghan/Bangladeshi Nationals

*118. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of Afghan and Bangladeshi nationals have been found involved in criminal activities;

(b) if so, what steps have been initiated to overcome the refugee/illegal migrants menace; and

(c) the details of extradition, if any, of the aforesaid nationals effected during 1998?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) According to available information some Bangladeshi nationals are reported to be involved in criminal activities.

(b) Several measures have been taken to curb and prevent infiltration. These include, inter alia, raising of additional battalions of the Border Security Force, reducing gaps between the border outposts, increase in the number of outposts towers, intensification of patrolling along the border, both land and riverine; surveillance on the coastal areas; accelerated programme of construction of border roads and fencing.

(c) No Afghan or Bangladeshi national was extradited during 1998 as there is no Extradition Treaty with these countries.

Reconsideration of closure of ECL mines

*119. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are reconsidering their earlier decision to close down 68 coal mines under the Eastern Coalfields India Ltd.; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) No decision has been taken at the level of the Government to close down 68 mines in Eastern Coalfields Limited.

(b) Does not arise in view of reply at (a) above.

Tax collection by BLTF

*120. SHRI O.P. KOHLI:
SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Indian Express dated 29th January, 1999, to the effect that in an attempt to build a strong financial base, the outlawed Bodo Liberation Tiger Force propose to collect tax from all categories of people in Nalbari district of lower Assam and are carrying out massive extortion racket there; and

(b) if so, the preventive steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government of Assam has been requested to sensitise all agencies and take all preventive steps to curb such criminal activities.

Import of coal

776. DR. B.B. DUTTA : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have imported coal during last five years;

(b) if so, the quantity and value thereof;

(c) what has been the necessity for the import; and

(d) the details of steps taken to improve the quality of coal required by Thermal Power Plants in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Government has not imported any coal to meet the demands of consumers. Such imports are made by the consumers themselves on quality consideration and commercial prudence. Coal being under OGL, its import is not monitored *by* Ministry of Coal. However, the details of coal imported into the country during the last five years as available with Ministry of coal are as follows:

Year	Import (In tonnes)		Value
	Coking	Non-Coking	Tolal
1993-94	0.57	7.39	Rs. 1463.29 crores (Ap- 6.82
1994-95	1.24	11.39	Rs. 2264.16 crores (Ap- 10.15
1995-96	3.14	12.51	US$. 925.6 million
1996-97	4.53	14.31	Rs. 3532.00 crores (Ap- 9.78
1997-98	6.56	17.21	Rs. 4422.30 crores (Ap- pro*) 10.65

(c) The bulk of imported coal is coking coal required by steel plants. Steel Plants are importing coal for the following reasons:—

(1) To bridge the gap between the requirement and indigenous availability of coking coal of the required quality.

(2) To improve the quality of overall blend for technical reasons for improving performance of blast furnace.

Some TPSs and cement plants located near to the coastal region are also importing coal because the present level of custom duty and railway freight structure which is favourable for imported coal.

(d) Coal companies are in a position to meet the full requirement of the TPSs. There has been substantial improvement in the quality of coal being supplied to the power stations as a result of which the electricity generated and the plant load factor (PLF) achieved by the TPSs has gone up. Coal Companies are setting up coal handling plants and feeder breakers to improve the quality of coal supplies to the TPSs. To check complaints on quality of coal, coal companies have agreed with the Council of Power Utilities to have sampling and analysis of coal both the loading and unloading ends by the same Independent 3rd Party Agency.

Fall in demand for coal

777. DR. Y. LAKSHMl PRASAD: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Singareni Collieries Ltd. has expressed concern over the fall in demand for coal;

(b) if so, the reasons for fall in demand; and

(c) the steps proposed to mine quality coal at competitive costs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There has been shortfall in demand of coal in the country because of general economic recession. The other reasons for reduced offtake of coal includes.

(1) Cement Companies are increasingly using imported coal which is cheaper than domestic coal in certain locations.

(2) Quality of coal is comparatively superior.

(3) Offtake of coal by power sector is reduced because of the stock availabel with power houses and because of increased generation from hydel power stations.

(c) The cost of domestic coal at pitheads is probably the lowest in the World. However, the cost to the consumer is higher owing to rail freight and high level of royalty and other imports on domestic coal as compared to imported coal.